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Jubilee  
at the  
Reading  
Peony Show

LEE R. BONNEWITZ,  
Van Wert, Ohio



## Note

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After every National Peony Show, beginning with the one in New York in 1916, I have mailed to every member of the Peony Society a communication with my estimate of the show, and in most every case the letter also told of a visit to some famous peony garden. These letters, usually in booklet form, have always been published and mailed at my own expense, and I hope to continue the custom if it meets the approval of our members.

LEE R. BONNEWITZ.

Van Wert, Ohio, June, 1920.





*American Peony Society Exhibition, Reading, Pa., June 10-11*  
Partial View of the Main Hall.



**Second Edition.**

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# **A Trip to the Reading Peony Show.**



En route Home from the Reading, Peony Show.  
Monday, June 14, 1920.

To the Members of The American Peony Society.

We have looked forward for a whole year to the Reading Show, and I expect to look back with pleasure upon it for the rest of my life. It was the prettiest show the society has ever put on—just enough space and just enough blooms to fill the space. One big room for the open classes, and a separate room for the amateur classes. And such enthusiasm as the exhibitors displayed, and such co-operation, and such helpfulness in staging the show, by those who could bring no blooms of their own.

All peony enthusiasts have their favorite varieties, and those of you who read my letter en route home from the Philadelphia Show three years ago, no doubt remember that Jubilee is the favorite in the Bonnewitz family. We always want to show Jubilee so that others may see its great beauty, and send their congratulations to Mrs. Pleas, who originated it, and whose declining years have been brightened by the fame which its beauty has brought to her. We could not show Jubilee in Cleveland two years ago because the date of the show was so late in the season that Jubilee had faded and gone, and the same fate overtook us in Detroit a year ago, and we began to realize that if we failed again for another whole year to show the world what a great peony Jubilee really is, that its fame would become mythical, and the story of its beauty would fade away as a dream.



*Jubilee in the Garden Monday morning  
before the petals began to open*



But when, on June 3, I received a wire that date of the show was fixed for Thursday, June 10, and Jubilee buds, though large, were still as hard as walnuts, my heart sank and hope grew faint. I knew we must leave Van Wert Wednesday noon, and on Sunday I gave the plant three buckets of water, in the hope that this might cause the buds to spring. Five o'clock Monday morning found me in the garden looking at the largest peony buds I had ever seen, but still as solid as ever. I visited the plants every hour of the day, and at 4 p. m. the first petal of the first of its sixteen glorious buds loosed itself from its fellows and the others soon began to follow its example, and I knew we might have a chance to take Jubilee to the show. Four o'clock Tuesday morning was none too early for me to be in my garden, for there I saw ten magnificent flesh pink buds showing an industrious desire to develop into world-beating blooms. I knew these buds needed to have an opportunity to grow during every minute of the time till Thursday at 2 o'clock p. m., when the judges would see them, if they were to be able to do justice to themselves. So I went to my local tinsmith and had him build for me four containers, each of which would carry two quarts of water and furnish both sustenance and protection for twenty blooms. It was with a happy heart that I spent the entire day labeling and cutting eight hundred blooms from my garden of seven hundred and fifty varieties of peonies to take with me to the show, for this work gave me unlimited opportunity to see the wondrous beauty of our favorite as it developed, hour by hour.

I could scarcely bear to leave the garden when darkness fell, for fear some harm might come to Jubilee in the night, and when morning dawned and I found fourteen blooms challenging the world for a beauty contest, I knew that the Reading Show would bring honor to Jubilee and gladness to the heart of Sarah A. Pleas, who now lives in Whittier, Cal., and is unable to see the beauty of her children, as she calls them. I have had reproduced for this booklet some of the pictures I have had taken for her pleasure and I trust you also may enjoy them.

We used four trunks to carry our eight hundred blooms to Reading, but Jubilee, LeCygne, Therese, Mrs. Harding, Frances Shaylor, Mary Woodberry Shaylor, Lady A. Duff, Opal, Midsummer Night's Dream, Frances Willard, Ginette,





*Jubilee on Wednesday morning, just before blooms were cut for the Show.*  
The blooms increased in size while in the container on way to the show.

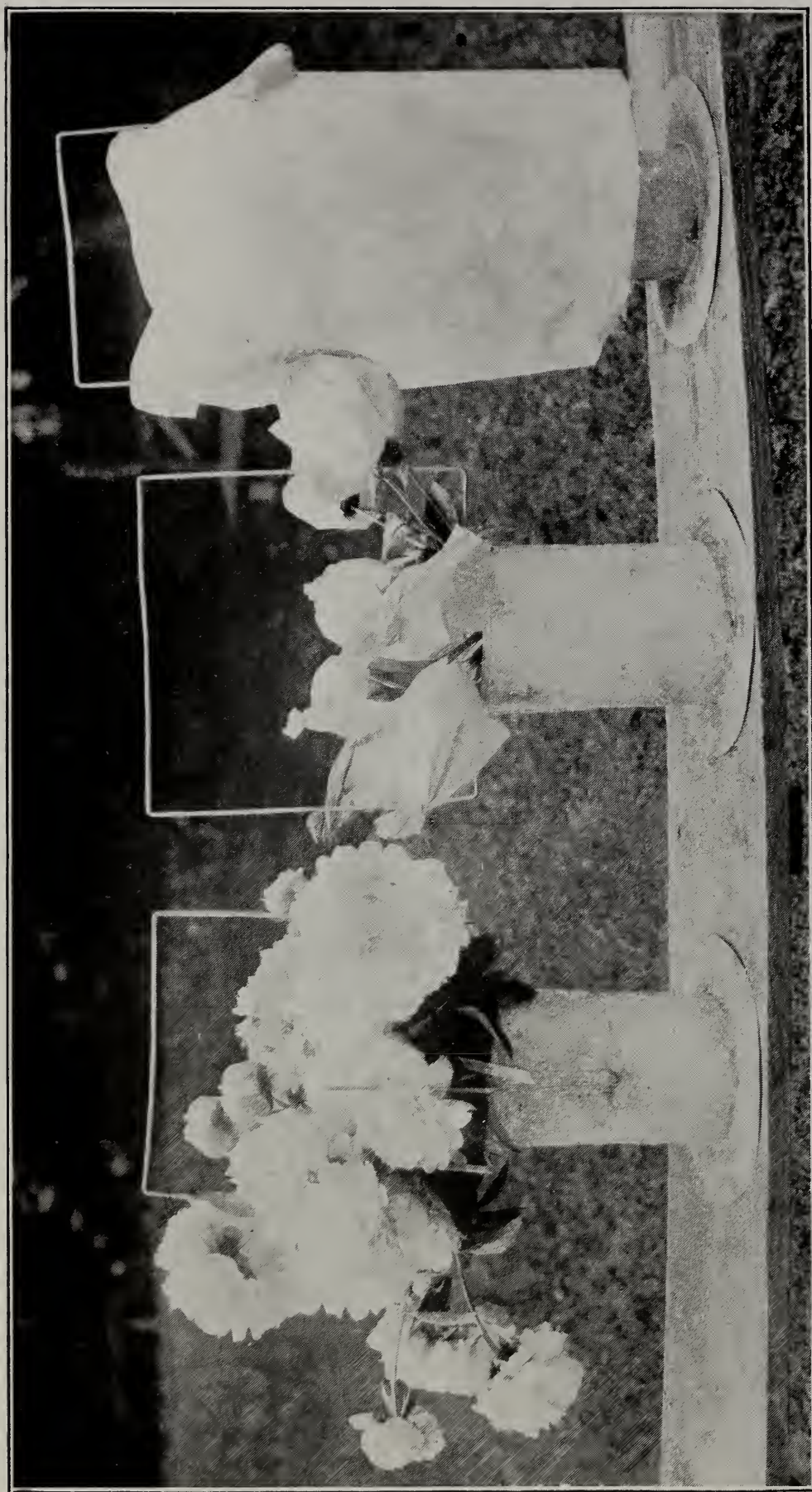


Georgiana Shaylor, and Suzette traveled with us in the Pullman, each of them safely wrapped in a paper bag with its stem in the water of the container and the entire bunch of blooms protected from the dust of travel.. I know the Pullman porter thinks the container idea is a splendid one for peony enthusiasts, for a photograph of his face when I gave him a dollar for taking care of the containers would add interest to this letter. We arrived in Reading at 8 o'clock a. m. with our four containers, and found the hotel filled with peonies and peony enthusiasts.

As President of the society, I found myself a very busy man and so I entrusted to Mrs. Bonnewitz the duty of staging Jubilee and its companions. On our Treasurer, A. H. Scott, of Chester, Pa., I thrust the responsibility of arranging a floor plan for the forty-one different classes, and I never knew a duty of such great responsibility to be so quickly and so successfully accomplished. Mr. Scott showed us immediately that he possessed that great talent we all wish for, executive ability.

Other matters of detail were entrusted to other loyal members who attended the show, but who could not exhibit because their peonies were not yet in bloom, and this gave me an opportunity to look after my own four trunks of Peony bloom which did not arrive till 10 o'clock a. m. Think of it, 10 o'clock a. m., eight hundred blooms, each in a paper bag to be opened, stem clipped, sorted, classified and the best blooms exhibited in sixteen different classes. What could one pair of hands, my own, accomplish? What could two pairs of hands, my own and Mrs. B.'s, accomplish? What could three pairs of hands, my own, my wife's and my daughter's accomplish toward properly staging these hundreds of blooms? Nothing. Ah, but here is where it pays to have friends; where friends can do what money can not do; and right now I want to pay my tribute to the friendship of A. M. Brand, of Fairbault, Minn.; Harry Little of Goodland, Ind.; Win and George Thurlow, of West Newbury, Mass.; Prof. Frank B. Meyer, of Westminster, Md.; A. S. Parker, of Detroit; Will McClelland, of Saginaw, Mich.; A. H. Scott, of Chester, Pa.; Mr. and Mrs. McClain, of Gibsonia, Pa.; Harry Norton, of Quebec, Can.; W. W. Cook, of Clinton, Iowa; Mr. Chambers and Mr. Stirl of Reading, and other good friends who took as much interest in my blooms





*This photo shows containers used to carry blooms to Reading Show*

No. 1 shows container used to carry blooms from the garden to the house. No. 2 shows a practically empty container, ready to receive the blooms for the show. Notice how each bloom is in a paper bag with the stem through a hole in the bottom of the bag, and the top of the bag twisted around the bloom. No. 3 shows container with cover over blooms.



as if they were their own, and remained on the scene until every bloom was in its place.

As a sportsmanlike exhibitor I did not care to witness the judging of my own blooms, so this gave me the first opportunity in a whole week to relax, and so I went to my room for a shave, a bath, and a nap, from which I was aroused by the telephone with the news that Jubilee had again taken the first prize for the "Best Six Blossoms" in the show, which decision I believe establishes the fact that Jubilee is one of the best peonies in the whole world.

Yes, we had a delightful dinner with the members of the Reading Chamber of Commerce, 6:30 to 8:45 o'clock in the evening, the large banquet hall being completely filled, twelve after-dinner speeches of three to four minutes each, then a fifteen minute intermission, followed by the annual meeting of the society, which lasted till after midnight. As presiding officer, I had a hard time to close the meeting even at that late hour, as the members seemed to think the matters under discussion warranted even a longer session. Mr. Havemeyer resigned as Director of the society and Mr. James Boyd was elected to fill the vacancy. All the other officers were re-elected. Boston was chosen as the place for the 1921 meeting.

It was the concensus of opinion that it was a laudable ambition to desire to introduce a seedling of great merit, but it was also decided that far, far too many seedlings were being placed upon the market and that introducers should hesitate longer before deciding that their productions had great merit.

Six o'clock next morning found several of us in Mr. Farr's exhibition garden, which is filled with some of the most famous peonies in the world, but unfortunately the date was too early and his choicest varieties were still in the bud. The weather had not been as warm as Mr. Farr expected and so his blooms were not yet at their best. His "Standard Bearer," however, was a great delight to us and his M. Martin Cahuzac sustained its great reputation. The great result we got from Mr. Farr's fields was the wonderful landscape effects of his immense beds of irises, possibly a quarter of an acre of each variety, on the sides of the hills. Probably at no other spot on the face of the earth can these splendid displays of purple and blue, yellow and lilac be duplicated. Seen from a distance of probably a quarter of





*American Peony Society Exhibition, Reading, Pa., June 10-11*

Partial view of the Gold Medal Collection of 100 Varieties Staged by James Boyd, (Movilla Gardens), Haverford, Pa.



a mile across a valley and on the sides of the hills, the effect was indescribable. We could not see flowers or foliage—all we could see was color, and color, as only Nature can paint it.

But now for the show, which I did not get to see until my return from the gardens, but for hours I gave it my study, and I must say that the blooms stood up in excellent condition longer than in any previous show. Even when we left the city, on Saturday morning, we saw many blooms which were still a credit to the exhibitors.

The big prize and the gold medal were won by our former President, Mr. James Boyd, of Haverford, Pa., who exhibited one hundred of the best blooms of the finest varieties I ever saw in any show. Here are some of the outstanding varieties: Jubilee, Le Cygne. Mrs. Edward Harding, La Fee, Opal, M. Martin Cahuzac, Suzette, Therese, Georgiana Shaylor, La France, William F. Turner, Germaine Bigot, Frances Willard, Judge Berry, Laura Dessert, Mme. D'Treyeran, Felix Crousse, LaFayette, Mme. Savereau, Mme. Joanne Sallier, E. G. Hill, Adolph Rousseau, Modest Guerin, Armandine Mechin, Ruth Brand, Karl Rosenfield, Standard Bearer, and Richard Carvel.

In the contest for the best display of ten varieties with vases of three blooms each, Mr. Boyd was again the winner and here are the varieties which stood out best in the display: Jubilee, Le Cygne, Therese, La France, M. Martin Cahuzac, Octavie Damay, M. Jules Elie.

The three classes for the best twenty blooms of white, of light pink and dark pink were all won by The Cottage Gardens with Duchesse de Nemours, Octavie Demay and Edulis Superba, and E. M. Buechly, of Greenville, Ohio, a new exhibitor, won the prize for the best vase of twenty reds with Louis Van Houtte.

I have already told you that Jubilee was the winner in the contest for the six best blooms in the show, which you know means the six best in the United States.

The first prize for the best specimen bloom in the show, which is just as great an honor as the best six, was won by Mr. Boyd with LeCygne, and it was quite remarkable when the second prize in this class was also won by a bloom of Le Cygne.

Mr. Boyd also won first prize for the best collection of new varieties introduced since 1905, and in this display we



*American Peony Society Exhibition, Reading, Pa., June 10-11*  
Vase of Jubilee in the Movilla Gardens Collection.



find *Le Cygne*, *Jubilee*, *Therese*, E. G. Hill, *Georgiana Shaylor*, *Le Fee*, *Mary Brand*, *Frances Shaylor*, *Mary Woodberry Shaylor*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Ruth Brand*, *Mary Brand*, and *Lora Dexheimer*.

Mrs. George S. Pomeroy, of Reading, won the prize for the most artistic arrangement of peonies in a vase or basket.

We were all hoping that some expert horticulturist would be on hand to surprise us with a new yellow peony of *Therese* quality and thus win the Harrison Memorial Prize, but we will have to wait still another year before our eyes shall see the yellow peony in its perfection.

When I left home, I had an ambition to capture the silver medal for the best display of fifty varieties staged by an amateur, but my good friend E. K. Schultz, of Philadelphia, put on a very much better show than I did, and I had to content myself with second prize. The varieties which stood out plain in this contest were *LeCygne*, *Therese*, *Opal*, *LaFee*, *Jubilee*, M. Martin Cahuzac, *Mont Blanc*, *Victoire de la Marne*, *Rosa Bonheur*, *Karl Rosenfield*, *Marguerite Gerard*, *La Perle*, *Eugenie Verdier*, *La Tendresse*, *Madame Geissler*.

Mr. Schultz was again the winner for the best display of ten varieties with three blooms of each in a vase. Here we again find the following outstanding varieties in the contest: *LeCygne*, *Therese*, M. Martin Cahuzac, *Mary Woodberry Shaylor*, *Lady A. Duff*, *Festiva Maxima*, and *Boule de Neige*.

Mr. Alfred H. Chambers, of Reading, put up the best show of single and Japanese peonies, and in his display there was one bloom so different from anything else shown that it attracted universal attention. I will not try to describe it, for Japs are hard to describe, but I have given him an order for it for my own garden.

*Adolphe Rousseau* is an old variety, but nothing has yet been found to displace it, and Mr. Schultz won with it first prize for the best display of fifteen blooms, any color. It is a good grower, of good color, and stands up well both in stem and texture.

Mr. Schultz won the next four prizes, and as I believe the members of the American Peony Society are interested in the names and varieties which are prize winners and which stand up unusually well, I will give here a list of the varieties which stood out most prominently, not only in Mr. Schultz's exhibit, but also in those of the other exhibitors.





*American Peony Society Exhibition, Reading, Pa., June 10-11*  
 Single Varieties from the Cottage Gardens Co., Queens, N. Y.



*American Peony Society Exhibition, Reading, Pa., June 10-11*  
 Le Cygne, Therese and Jubilee, Entered by Lee R. Bonnewitz, Van Wert, Ohio

This list, and all the following ones, were made up by a committee of our members who were studying the show and taking notes for our own information.

Whites—Le Cygne, Jubilee, La France, Albatre, Boule de Neige, La Rosiere.

Light Pinks—Therese, Mignon, La Perle.

Dark Pinks—Rosa Bonheur, Madame Camille Bancel, Suzanne Dessert.

Dark Reds—M. Martin Cahuzac, Karl Rosenfield, Pierre Dessert, Armandine Mechin, Masterpiece.

In the novice amateur class No. 29, Thomas T. Taylor, of Ogontz, Pa., won with La Perle, Madame Geissler, and Madame d'Hour.

For the best vase of three white blooms, Jubilee from Alice Bonnewitz's garden took the prize. Thomas T. Taylor used a Therese to win the prize for the three best pinks. Herbert Taylor used a Madame Geissler to win the prize for the best dark pinks, and Karl Rosenfield from Alice Bonnewitz's garden won the prize for the best reds.

E. M. Buechly, of Greenville, was quite fortunate as an exhibitor, and he was first in Class 34. He used two reliable old varieties, M. Jules Elie and Festiva Maxima.

Alfred H. Chambers, of Reading, gets a root of Jubilee by winning in Class 36, in which he used Souvenir de Gaspard Calot.

Edward P. Schwartz, of Gaithersburg, Md., made a most creditable display in Class 37, and he used these varieties: Souvenir de Louis Bigot, Reine Hortense, Stanley, Albatre, Madame Geissler, and Duke of Wellington.

Very few peonies could be shown by members living farther north than Reading, but our Secretary, Prof. A. P. Saunders, exhibited twenty-five different kinds of tree peonies, and G. B. Babcock, of Jamestown, made a nice display of the early varieties of herbaceous species, not including those of Chinese origin. Both Mr. Farr, of Wyomissing Nurseries, and Mr. Klein, of Mohican Gardens, were generous in their displays of vases and baskets containing twenty-five to one hundred blooms of a kind, and I noticed our members giving careful attention to these displays, which added so much to the appearance of the show, although they were not entered for prizes.

A whole afternoon's automobile ride with visits to Farr's Specimen Gardens and Mohican Gardens was furnished us





*American Peony Society Exhibition, Reading, Pa., June 10-11*  
Miss Alice Bonnewitz and Vase of Jubilee.

by the members of the Chamber of Commerce, and we received numerous invitations to return to Reading for a future show.

Now I ought to close this letter right here, and you may stop reading at this point if you wish, but to those who are interested, I want to tell of a two-day's trip to Haverford, Pa., and its vicinity.

Mr. Boyd invited us to see his garden on Saturday and we promptly accepted the invitation, but when I saw it I was so delighted with it that I remained till Sunday evening, and I really could have profitably spent two more days in it, but my own garden was calling me all the time. Mr. Boyd does not hesitate to say that he uses fertilizer, and his plants show in both foliage and bloom that they are in as good condition as plants can be. He also uses a Skinner overhead sprinkling system, and that may possibly help explain the reasons that enabled him to produce the kind of blooms which deserved and won the gold medal. His plants are three years old and his garden, as a whole, is the most beautiful in its results of any I have ever seen. In August I expect to publish my notes on my own garden, and, if Mr. Boyd gives me permission, I would like to include the notes I made in his garden during my two days stay. Mr. Boyd is eliminating all but the peonies of the highest grade, and so his garden is like a peony show in itself. One of the first plants I saw was an Opal which I had given Mr. Boyd three years ago, and right beside it was the Jewel. The blooms of these two plants were of the most beautiful opalescent pink, of splendid size and quality, and I really wished that Mrs. Please could see them with the prize winning Jubilee.

The real event of the whole trip was a visit with Mr. Boyd to the following famous gardens, some of them comprising an acreage so large that I hesitate to give it, for fear of losing my reputation for truthfulness. Some of them had the advantage of running streams, and they all had the setting of hills for a background which we people from the flat Middle West appreciate so much because we can not have it ourselves.

At the home of Mr. and Mrs. Horatio Gates Lloyd, of Haverford, we saw formal gardens in the making in which water is to have more than the usual prominence. We were delighted with the Iris garden which was completed and with the roses which have not been disturbed by the transforma-





*American Peony Society Exhibition, Reading, Pa., June 10-11*  
Major Loder, a Fine Single in the Exhibit of B. H. Farr, Reading

tion now taking place. This place will deserve a visit by artists when it is completed..

At the home of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Warden, also of Haverford, we found the kind of a garden to live in, and the family were enjoying it upon our arrival. The master and mistress of the garden both love roses and the roses were responding to the care bestowed upon them and blooming profusely. No visitor to this garden will forget the wisteria pergola, nor the view across the valley to the hills in the distance.

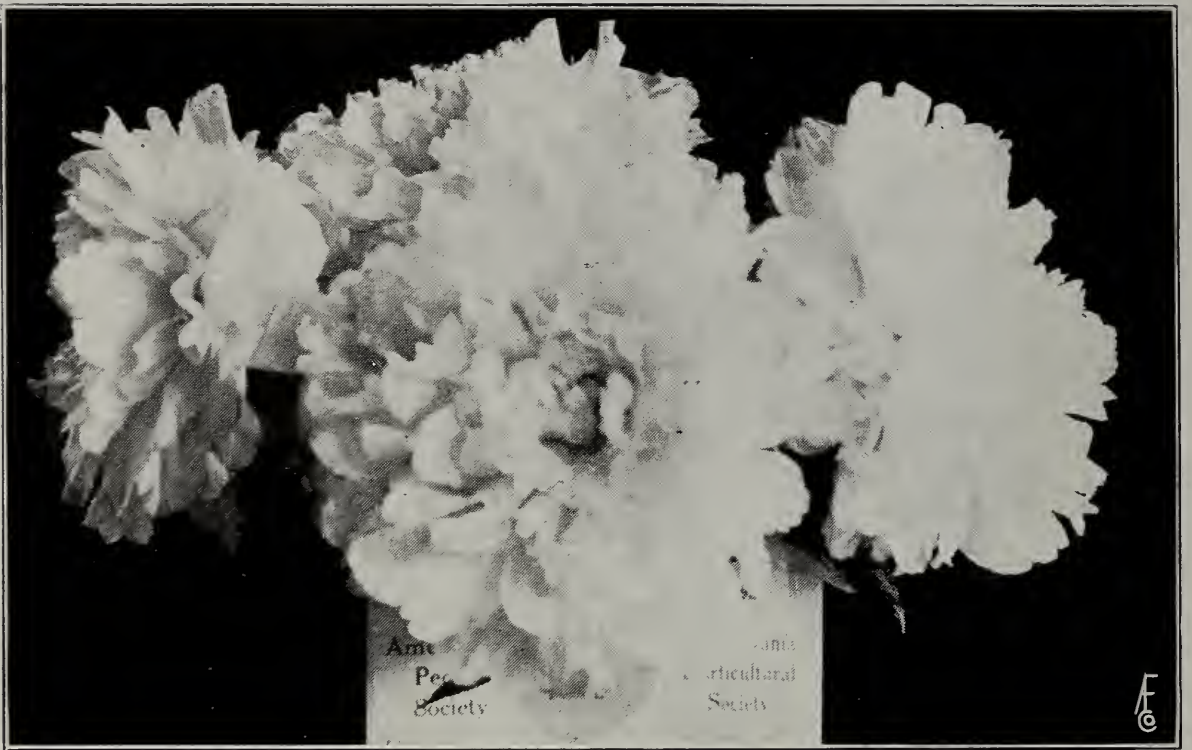
Mr. and Mrs. Alba B. Johnson of Rosemont have the most successful formal garden I have ever seen, with a succession of different levels, each with a garden of its own. The features were pools, wall fountains, a miniature garden temple and garden gods. There was one nook which reminded me of the Acropolis in Athens, and there were surprises at every turn. Adjoining the formal garden was a natural garden with its open green, flowing stream and natural shrubbery. And this likewise opened into what seemed to us a bit of forest primeval. I have no idea of the size of this garden as we did not find its borders.

On the estate of Mr. and Mrs. Morris L. Clothier, of Villa Nova, we found still another kind of garden—a walled garden with a great elm in the center, and with a castellated window in the wall, from which a most excellent view was obtained. Another view from this garden is the historic gap through which the Continental soldiers marched to Valley Forge. Mrs. Clothier's care is bestowed upon a rock garden, which rewards her with dainty flowers and foliage.

The last garden we visited was at the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. Franklin McFadden, of Radnor. Here we found both the formal and informal types. In the formal garden we found roses on arches, a crabapple colonade or walk, a cornus florida or dogwood walk, a lily pond, a wall rock garden, a Ponte Vecchio sundial, all of which interested us. His informal garden, with all our native shrubs and trees and with an iris garden in a secluded view, will bear visits at all seasons.

We also hope to have a garden which will give pleasure to garden lovers.





*American Peony Society Exhibition, Reading, Pa. June 10-11*  
Vase of Jubilee Exhibited by Lee R. Bonnewitz, Van Wert, O.

## NOTES ON THE PEONY SHOW

Last year after the Detroit Show, our Secretary, Professor Saunders, graduated from the amateur class into the professional class, and I understand his famous peony, Grace Loomis, is now to be found in many gardens.

This year the President of the Peony Society graduated also and begins to sell from his gardens. His first sale was just one root of peony "Mrs. Edward Harding" to Mr. E. M. Garrison, of Montclair, N. J., and the price was one hundred dollars. He will dispose of only four more roots of it this season. The blooms from one year plants of that variety showed the quality and older plants of it will show the size.

Mr. Boyd's gardens, known as The Movilla Garden is equipped with a Skinner overhead irrigating system, and his blooms took the gold medal at the show. I have no doubt the Skinner system did its share toward winning the prize.

Less than a week before the show, the Skinner people wrote me they would offer a complete fifty-foot system as a prize to an amateur in the show this year, and also in the show next year. The officers and members at our meeting were delighted to hear of their offer, but we did not get a chance to give notice of it this year, and the officers are hoping that the Skinner people will let us offer both of them next year. Such prizes will bring out a new set of amateurs and it will make both the Secretary and President wish they were back in the beginners' class again.

I hope every member who attends the Boston show will have a container made, in which he can bring twenty or twenty-five of his best blooms.

If you wish to invite some of your friends, either in your own vicinity or elsewhere, to join the Peony Society, the President will be glad to furnish you the printed invitations for the purpose.

We members who live in the West and who have been taking five hundred to one thousand blooms to the last three shows, will expect New England, Canada and New York to furnish the great quantity of blooms for the Boston Show. We from the west will bring specimens of the very best we have in late varieties.



If you approve the custom of having these letters sent you after the show, the President would be glad to know it. If you do not approve, it will be no trouble to remove your name from the mailing list.

As this little booklet is printed and mailed at my expense, I hope you will take no offense when you find a price list of my choicest varieties enclosed on a separate loose sheet.

The show this year was much too early for some famous prizewinners like Glorious, Elwood Pleas, Enchantress, Milton Hill, Solange, Eugene Verdier, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Madame Jules Dessert.

Look out for them next year. All members south of Boston will have an excellent chance with late varieties.

In my garden I have over seven hundred and fifty varieties of peonies and five hundred varieties of irises.

I have purchased this large assortment of varieties for the express purpose of forming an intelligent opinion and in order to have the right to judge adversely of a variety if it has no merit.

I feel very free to say of a poor peony in my own garden, that it should be discarded, while I might hesitate to utterly condemn it in Mr. Thurlow's, or Mr. Farr's, or Mr. Ruff's garden.

However, I am glad to invite all members of the Peony Society to study the different varieties in my garden and to publish their opinions of them, and if in my judgment some variety deserves a better standing than published reports would indicate, I will try to bring blooms of that variety to one of our national shows and have it contest for a place in the class in which I think it belongs.

In August I expect to publish my first annual booklet of garden notes, in which I will recommend that certain varieties of both peonies and irises be stricken from our lists.

If any of our members wish a copy of my book of garden notes, it will be mailed to all who write for it.

LEE R. BONNEWITZ.







